

## 1 Introduction

Political change since the 1994 elections in South Africa has done little to bring about much needed economic change for the vast majority who were dispossessed as a result of colonialism and the policies of apartheid. Since the coming to power of the Government of National Unity under Nelson Mandela there has been little change in the situation of the black 75 per cent of the population living in third world conditions with a standard of living slightly better than that in the Congo. Nor has there been any change in the circumstances of the white 12 per cent of the population who enjoy a standard of living equal to that of Canadians.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the government's move away from redistribution to neo-liberalism promises little change in the life circumstances for that 75 per cent in need of change (Adelzadeh and Padayachee 1995; Pillay 1996).

South Africa is one of the world's most unequal societies in terms of income distribution (as measured by the Gini coefficient), land distribution and water distribution (Lipton *et al.*, 1996). The post-apartheid government attempts to address rural poverty and inequitable land distribution through its land reform programme. There is widespread agreement that more equitable distribution of land is an urgent need if South Africa is to achieve stable transformation. However, the prospects for land reform are threatened by the government's neo-liberal macroeconomic framework, and the pressures of globalisation.

This paper looks at the South African Government's land reform programme and assesses its potential for achieving its goals of social justice, poverty alleviation and gender equity. I argue that in addition to shortcomings relating to market based solutions, rural women's interests will not be met adequately because of current shortcomings in addressing gender, and because of the fact that rural women do not constitute a force to be reckoned with in considering policy alternatives. Present shortcomings can begin to be rectified through placing redistribution at the centre of government's agenda, through more serious consideration of gender as a

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<sup>1</sup> Figures quoted by Jay Naidoo, then Minister in charge of the Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme, *Star Newspaper*, March 1996.

# Gender and Land Rights

## *The Struggle over Resources in Post-Apartheid South Africa*

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stratifier of social life, and through the organised action of rural women as a social force.

I begin by clarifying an approach to understanding gender and women. I note the complexity of South Africa's rural areas. I then look at key issues for women in South Africa's rural areas. Next I look at government responses to poverty and gender in the land reform programme; and I briefly discuss the role of NGOs and women's organisations.

## 2 Gender vs Women

Gender refers to the social relations between women and men. Women are generally disadvantaged as compared with men of the same race, class, ethnicity and so on, in access to and control over resources, and authority (Agarwal 1988; Friedman 1994). Women and men have specific roles allocated on the basis of a gendered division of labour, and this tends to result in different needs, interests, and experiences between women and men (Middleton 1997). Thus even within one household, women and men's differences in their control over resources and their specific location within the gendered division of labour will result in different experiences of poverty, and in different priorities (James and Ngcobo 1997).

The power men have over women in most societies results in men advancing their interests as those of the community. Hence policies directed at the poor with no awareness of gender differentiation will tend to take men's interests as those of the poor.

An awareness of gender power relations, as opposed to targeting women as a part of the poor, and a commitment to transforming inequitable gender relations are crucial if social justice and equity goals are to be met.

However, it is important to note that the failure to address gender transformation results not only from a conceptual defect. It relates in addition to deeply engrained prejudices at a personal level, within academic discourse, in the policy arena and within organisations. The notion of gender power relations challenges deeply entrenched ways of knowing, theorising and doing. Gender as a cultural construct has had an impact on the construction of knowledge (Beneria 1995) and this in turn impacts on ways of seeing and doing.

## 3 South Africa's Rural Areas

South Africa's rural areas are complex spaces. There are on the one hand those rural areas that were a part of the four provinces of the former Republic of South Africa under apartheid. On the other hand there are the former *bantustans*.

Within the former Republic of South Africa are the white-owned commercial farms and small towns. Under apartheid white commercial farmers constituted government's political base and had privileged access to irrigation, credit, marketing facilities, subsidies, goods roads, electricity, education and cheap labour. While the level of subsidies and credit available to these farmers is presently declining, their privileged status relative to struggling black emerging and subsistence farmers is still intact. Nonetheless, organised white farmers, threatened by land and agricultural reform, react at every turn against government legislation on land reform. It is estimated that 250,000 farm workers were retrenched between 1989 and mid 1993 in advance of legislation and union campaigns to improve wages and working conditions (Murray 1994). Currently farmers are protesting against legislation preventing the arbitrary eviction of labour tenants from farms, and government fears arbitrary evictions in reaction to the legislation (**Business Day**, February 1997). Although trade unions for farm workers exist these are very weak.

The former *bantustans* make up the 13 per cent of the country's land to which the country's black population (85 per cent of the total population) was relegated under apartheid. The former *bantustans* include dense resettlements areas created by the removal of the so-called 'black spots' as part of apartheid's plan to remove from 'white South Africa' the 'surplus people' whose labour apartheid capital did not require. The former *bantustans* also include small towns, commercial farming areas, areas close to cities, and deeply rural areas remote from basic infrastructure and services. Generally these areas are overcrowded, the land is severely eroded and water is not easily available.

An understanding of the complexity of rural areas points to specific challenges for development based on place, and it points to differences among black rural women depending on whether they are farm

worker, farm worker dependent, labour tenant, resident in a *bantustan* settlement, or on the periphery at a distance from even basic infrastructure and services (see for example Sharp and Spiegel 1990).

Residents of the former *bantustans* are at a disadvantage as compared with residents of the former Republic of South Africa as many of the laws promulgated by the apartheid Government have not been extended to the former *bantustans*. So, for example, among other provisions, they do not qualify for legal aid. It would seem that this is the result of an administrative backlog. However, this does seem to be an infringement of these citizens' constitutional rights.

#### 4 The Race, Gender and Space Dimensions of Poverty

A recent Government report, *Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa* (prepared for the Office of Reconstruction and Development by the World Bank and based on a study by SALDRU at the University of Cape Town), highlights the racial, spatial, and gendered nature of poverty in South Africa.

It is no surprise that poverty takes this form in South Africa. As Kabeer (1994) points out, poverty arises from unequal social relations which dictate unequal relations to resources, claims, and responsibilities. In other words, people do not start out at the same point in the social system, and access to resources and power to determine one's destiny is shaped by social relation of class, gender and race.

The devastation resulting from the apartheid state's forced removal policies in order to demarcate the spatial dimension of the apartheid state has resulted in more extreme poverty in rural areas. While 53 per cent of the population of South Africa live in rural areas, almost 75 per cent of South Africa's poor live in rural areas. Within rural areas the study points to greater poverty in the former *bantustans*. This results today in nearly two thirds of South Africa's poor living in the three provinces which include the former *bantustans* – the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province.

According to the RDP study 53 per cent of South Africa's population are classified poor, experiencing high unemployment, hunger and malnutrition, inability to pay for, or lack of access to health care and basic services, and the risk of homelessness. By race 65 per cent of all Africans are poor, and nearly 95 per cent of South Africa's poor are African.<sup>2</sup>

The study notes that a higher proportion of working-age women live in poor households, and a higher proportion of the poor elderly are women. In addition, women suffer from substantially higher unemployment rates than men (36 per cent vs 26 per cent). The study found that households headed by females had a 50 per cent higher poverty rate than male headed households. The data thus suggest that a greater percentage of women than men are poor, and that the risk of being in a poor household was higher for women than for men. These findings reflect women's disadvantaged position in the labour market in terms of jobs and incomes (Posel 1994) as well as the constraints women face in mobility (James and Ngcobo 1997; Todes 1995).

Today it is clear that what is referred to as 'circular migration' continues as a way of life for male rural dwellers, while women are, by and large, the permanent dwellers in most rural areas. Women's mobility is constrained by men who expect women to keep the rural base going while they come and go during periods of employment and unemployment, and by women's responsibilities for and the old and infirm (Todes 1995).

Hence, despite the increasing influx of families into the urban areas, South Africa's rural areas will not disappear. The reality of male circular migration points to male power, the close links between urban and rural and to the dangers of approaching development policy as though rural areas were separate, encapsulated spaces. And it indicates that failure to develop rural areas will be to the detriment of women, their full time residents, who live largely under conditions of poverty with very little access to clean water, toilets or health facilities.

Women's greater poverty risk was evident in the RDP study, even though the study focused on

<sup>2</sup> Figures for the other race groups are as follows: 33 per cent of all Coloureds are poor, 2.5 per cent of Indians are poor and 0.7 per cent of Whites are poor. Of all the poor

in South Africa 5 per cent are Coloured and less than 1 per cent are Indian or White

interhousehold poverty and assumed intra-household resource allocation within the household to be equitable. Thus, in the study anyone belonging to a poor household was considered poor. And anyone in a nonpoor household was not poor. As Posel (1994) points out, these poverty indicators are not sensitive to two important concerns – the extent of poverty among different household members, and the incidence of poverty among women in non poor households. Further, studies such as this do not consider women's reproductive labour. Women's share of poverty and well-being is thus underestimated by such an approach.

Comprehensive, micro-level investigation will give a sense of intrahousehold resource allocation. Posel (1994) attempts to give a sense of women's reproductive labour by pointing to the average dependency ratio (of children to adults) in South African rural households – this is 0.94; that approximately 38.2 per cent of all households are without running water in homes, and are dependent on fetching water for cooking, washing and drinking, and more than half of these poor households are in rural areas. Almost 30 per cent of all households use wood as their main energy source, and in most cases (84.4 per cent) wood has to be collected. Women in poor rural houses are estimated to spend approximately six and a half hours a week collecting firewood.

The RDP study reflects the greatest concerns of the poor to be: jobs, piped water, housing, food aid, electricity, and schools, in that order. Among the rural poor electricity clinics and roads also ranged as high priorities.

Land is required primarily for housing, settlement and social infrastructure under present conditions of overcrowding and lack of security of tenure. Land for small-scale farming is a secondary concern for most, but is a primary concern for a significant minority (DLA, 1996).

## **5 Responses to Poverty and Gender in the Land Reform Programme**

The Department of Land Affairs is responsible for the country's land reform programme. The focus of this programme is social justice and poverty

alleviation and to 'create and establish an equitable and fair land dispensation'. The Department's **Green Paper on Land** notes gender equality among its principles and women are prioritised among those most in need of land. In order to address women's land needs the department established a subdirectoriate on gender in 1996, and has introduced mechanisms aimed at ensuring women's participation in land reform. However, thus far delivery of land to beneficiary communities has been very slow, and there is little evidence that women are being included in land reform.

In addressing the need for land the department notes that for the vast majority of rural women and men land is needed for residential purposes in the first place. This is an overwhelming need given the overcrowding and insecure tenure resulting from the removals and the creation of the *bantustans*, and from the insecurity of labour tenants and farm workers, given their conditions on farms. In addition, for most rural households land will contribute to food security and may comprise one means of income among a range of livelihood strategies (Walker 1994).

The Department's **Green Paper** notes that the primary aim of the land reform programme is 'to redress the injustices of apartheid and to alleviate the impoverishment and suffering it caused' (DLA 96: 5). Policy goals prioritise the 'poor who are in need of land to contribute to income and food security'.

The government land reform programme has three main programmes – redistribution, restitution and tenure reform. The major provision to effect land reform through the redistribution programme is a R15,000 grant to households with an income of less than R1,500 a month. Up to 40 per cent of the grant may be used to purchase land, the rest is intended for top-structure and infrastructure. The grant is seen as a subsidy to reach as many households as possible, and is set at the same amount as the National Housing Subsidy. Beneficiaries may choose when and how to take this subsidy and may apply for both the land and housing subsidy but a household will not get more than R15,000.

Two main problems with attempting to effect land reform in this way are firstly the limits of state resources to extend the R15,000 grant to the

estimated 3.08 million households who qualify; and secondly the smallness of the grant to set up a household in even basic subsistence agriculture.

The Department of Land Affairs' budget makes up 0.3 per cent of the government's 1996/97 national budget. In line with its policy agenda of reduced state spending this amount is not likely to be increased in the next budget. Government's neoliberal economic framework dictates a market-based programme, which operates on the basis of willing buyer, willing seller arrangements. The property clause in the country's constitution guarantees the existing (unequal) rights of current property holders, and determines that market prices will be paid for any land government might expropriate. Thus far land has been purchased from willing farmer-sellers and there has been no case of expropriation.

As Marcus *et al.* (1996) point out the high price of privately owned land is likely to limit the beneficiaries in a land reform cum agricultural initiative and to result in government trading off soil potential against surface area in order to spread resources to a larger number of beneficiaries. Close to half of the amount of the grant will go to the seller of the land, often a white farmer, thus resulting in those who were privileged under apartheid benefiting further under post-apartheid reforms.

Evidence from a land reform pilot programme in KwaZulu-Natal, where production potential is low and the majority of households live in rural poverty, shows the inadequacy of the grant per household. 'Market led, state assisted reform initiatives there have exerted pressure on communities to liquidate all savings in order to get land. The outcome of this is that while land has been acquired, resources in many households have been stretched to extremes' (May 1995: 52). These households do not have savings or easily accessed capital to develop their newly acquired land. May recounts growing resentment that treasured wealth accumulated over years and which could have been used for survival, productive or other services has been sunk into buying land.

Two other key programmes within the land reform programme are Restitution and Tenure Reform. There are questions about the adequacy of the state's budget to cover these programmes adequately (Meer forthcoming).

The Restitution programme is concerned with restoring land or providing compensation to people who were dispossessed of their land as a result of racially discriminatory legislation and practice. The Restitution of Land Rights Act provides for the establishment of a Commission for Restitution of Land Rights and a Land Claims Court. The Act sets up mechanisms to resolve claims through negotiation and mediation between claimants and current owners and holders of contested land. Where parties reach an agreement, the Chief Land Claims Commissioner applies to the Land Claims Court requesting that the agreement be made an order of court. Where no agreement can be reached the claim must be referred to the Land Claims Court for adjudication. Delivery with restitution has been extremely slow. Of the 10,000 claims lodged by the end of August 1996, only 648 had been gazetted and the one case that came before the land claims court was thrown out on technical grounds. Community frustrations are evident in the words of one community member who says: 'When our land was taken from us, there weren't all these processes in place. It was simply taken. But now that we have to get our land back, we have to go through a number of processes. Why?' (Nyandu, 1996: 8). The conflictual potential is evident in a recent example of a claim by black communities against a developed white upper middle class suburb of civil servants in Pretoria (**Business Day**, February 1997) and in the increasing demand that mineral rights be included in restitution (**Business Day**, February, 1997).

Tenure reform addresses the need to strengthen the informal land rights of individuals and communities, particularly in the former *bantustans*. It poses enormous challenges as there are poor records on land occupation, and because it directly threatens the power of chiefs who are/were in control of land allocation (**Business Day**, 30 December 1996)

The department's approach to the land question tends to slip into addressing political problems with legal solutions. The inadequacy of legal pronouncements is proven almost daily as still powerful white farmer interests challenge government, as is currently the case with the proposed tenure reform law which prevents farmers from arbitrarily evicting farm workers and labour tenants. On the other hand poor rural women and men are largely

unorganised, illiterate, lack information and their voices are not heard.

In addition to problems with approach, the department is hampered in effecting delivery by staff and skills shortages, and by institutional problems. The department is a relatively new department, set up in 1994 after the first democratic elections. It faced the task of setting up new systems, hiring staff, developing policy, bringing in new laws at the same time as it set into place the land reform pilots. In addition it faces the challenges of reorientation of staff inherited from the old regime and of liaising with other government departments, for example agriculture whose policy priorities still revolve around the needs of white commercial farmers (Meer forthcoming).

## **5.1 Responses to women's land access**

As far as women's access to land is concerned, the **Green Paper** notes women at times as a special group, while categories such as farm workers and labour tenants are mentioned as though they were male categories, ignoring the growing numbers of farm workers who are in fact women (Sender and Johnstone 1996; Hill-Lanz and Rickets 1997). There is hence an uneven, add-on approach to women, and gender relations are not adequately considered.

However, despite these shortcomings, the department has been innovative in its approach and has prescribed women's involvement in the land reform pilot structures, in the Community Property Associations (land-holding entities for group ownership) and within the restitution programme.

## **5.2 Pilots**

The Land Reform Pilot Programme has been set up as a mechanism to 'kick-start land redistribution' and to serve as the basis for learning and expansion. Pilot projects have been set up in each of the nine provinces. Institutional structures within the pilot include a steering committee, a district forum and a district office. The Pilot Programme requires the participation of women in representative decision-making structures for district and project planning and measures to ensure that rural women gain social and economic benefits (Hargreaves, 1996).

Despite such requirements and measures there is little evidence that women are participating or reaping benefits. Evidence on women's participation is available for three pilots – the Western Cape, North West Province and Mpumalanga pilots. In all of these pilots women's participation is poor (Hargreaves 1996, Du Toit 1996). Of the three pilots Mpumalanga has the best record, with a women chair and four of the 15 representatives of the district forum being women. This is clearly a reflection of the gains made by the Rural Women's Movement, an organised and active women's grouping in the area. However, time limitations resulting from multiple workloads on the one hand, and social and cultural barriers on the other, place these women at a disadvantage as compared with the men on the district forum, and restricts them from participating fully. Women's participation is likely to be hindered further by the staff profile of men, the majority of whom have a 'traditional background' (Hargreaves 1996).

In addition the institutions lacked clear gender guidelines in planning and beneficiary selection. Hargreaves (1996) points to the problem of 'institutional confusion' – a lack of clarity of roles and a lack of co-ordination among the structures set up. This leads to gender inclusive processes at one level being undone at another.

## **5.3 Community Property Associations**

The Department of Land Affairs has also pioneered mechanisms to ensure women's inclusion in tenure reform. Tenure reform is intended to provide security of tenure through group or individual ownership.

Since tenure reform is about formalising existing rights it can end up formalising men's rights and render women, as well as junior males, more vulnerable than under informal tenure. Traditionally men held permits to occupy land, so it is men's rights that are formalised under tenure reform. The introduction of legal title allows the title holders (men) to sell, and this threatens women's previously secure access rights. Hence women can be worse-off as a result of tenure reform. Particularly vulnerable are women married to migrant workers with a second wife. Women have expressed fears about the consequences to them of tenure reform, and in one

situation, in Namaqualnad, as legal reform was taking place, women organised themselves in order to ensure their rights to land (Archer and Meer 1997).

Recognising the problems inherent in tenure reform the Department of Land Affairs has introduced mechanisms to ensure that all who shared previous rights are accommodated in the new form of land holding (Claasens 1996). The Department has designed a new form of group ownership – the Community Property Association (CPA). The CPA allows for group-based membership, while it protects individual rights within the group. Rules of membership and management for the CPA are drawn up in a constitution. CPA rules allow for the rights of all in a family to appear in a title deed, and gender equality is set down as a pre-requisite for setting up a CPA. If the CPA constitution says, for example, that only sons may inherit, the Department of Land Affairs will reject the constitution. The Department has the right to monitor that the rules of the CPA, including gender equality, are carried out.

## 5.4 Restitution

The Restitution Act provides scope for the Commission and the Court to advance women's access to land. The legislators recognised constraints which will make it difficult for women to put forward claims independently of male relatives. They therefore include certain provisions to 'address the problem of patriarchal social relations which may inhibit women from exercising their rights' (Walker 1995: 30). These include the attention given to the definition of direct descendant, so that it includes a spouse or partner in a customary union, thus allowing a customary law widow to claim land lost by her deceased husband without having to be represented by a male family member. Another provision gives the Land Claims Court the discretion in shaping the nature of the final settlement – 'the manner in which rights are held or compensation is to be paid' (subsection 55 (2) (c) of the Act) and an order of the court shall be subject to conditions the court considers necessary to ensure all dispossessed community members including women and tenants benefit on a fair, non-discriminatory basis.

## 5.5 Legal reforms and mechanisms

The DLA Green Paper recognises that government has an important role to play in removing legal restrictions which stand in the way of women's participation in land reform. This includes reform of marriage laws, reforming customary inheritance law where they contain obstacles to women's receiving rights to land. Other measures noted in the **Green Paper** are:

- Clear mechanisms in both project planning, beneficiary selection and project appraisal to ensure that women as a group truly benefit from the programme
- Specific provision for women to enable them to access financial services
- Specific mechanisms to provide security of tenure for women including the possibility of registering assets gained through land reform in the name of the household or its individual members
- Training in participatory gender planning for all officials and organisations in implementing the land reform programme

However, there is little evidence that these measures are being implemented, and the lack of gender disaggregated data calls into question the commitment to the above measures, since this prevents effective monitoring.

## 5.6 What should the government's role be?

The role government should play in advancing gender equity is a complex and critical issue. On the one hand there is the tension between speedy delivery and gender equity. On the other there is the question of what role is appropriate and possible for government.

There is the danger that government might compromise the principle of gender equity in order to meet expectations for speedy delivery (Walker 1995). The difficulty is that attitudes relating to gender relations cannot be shifted quickly. Resistance to redefining women's roles and rights, or nervousness among men and even women about the consequences of change, makes it unlikely that a few meetings or pronouncements by government on women's rights will suffice.

Given this, Walker (1995) raises the question of the appropriateness of outside agents to any one community to initiate major changes which they are unable to support or take responsibility for in the long term. She points out there are legal limits on what the Restitution Commission, for example, can do to 'restructure the generally patriarchal land rights that are now being claimed back' (Walker 1995: 30). On what basis, she asks, can the Commission restore land rights to other than the legal heirs where, for example, dispossessed owners willed inheritance rights in property to sons and excluded daughters?

With reference to the land reform pilot structures, Hornby (1996) raises similar concerns. 'The issue is clearly complex. Land reform cannot be made conditional on ending a patriarchal system that has been in place for centuries. But not to challenge it is to lose a critical opportunity. The question is how.' As Hornby points out, women's needs are complex. They share with their husbands, brothers and sons the need for secure tenure. But they face insecurity as a result of inheritance and customary marriage practices when husbands (or fathers) die, or when divorced.

Walker (1995) suggests that, given the complexity of the issue, NGOs have a crucial role to play, since they have ongoing, more lasting contacts with communities as compared with any government structure.

Further, without strong lobbying by women legal provisions will have little effect. In addition to the laws and regulations thus far in place in the land reform programme, women can also draw on the interim constitution which contains a clause prohibiting gender discrimination, and on the newly appointed Commission on Gender Equality. However without organisation it is not likely that women will access such provision.

Government also has a role in ensuring information on land reform reaches the intended beneficiaries. The land reform programme is meant to operate on a demand-driven basis, and therefore places the onus on communities to approach the relevant department or institution. Such a system is likely, however, to privilege those communities and individuals who have a head start over others. Hence,

the literate and urban-based will be at an advantage over the illiterate and deeply rural in taking up the available opportunities for land access. Men, because of their greater literacy and mobility, will be better informed and therefore advantaged over women. Indian and Coloured people affected by Group Areas Act Removals will be better placed to claim restitution than deeply rural African people.

Besides women's constraints linked to their lack of mobility, men in communities often act as gatekeepers preventing outsiders reaching women. Fieldworkers from NGOs are sometimes blocked by male community leaders from reaching women (Ngubane 1996). Unless ways are found to get information to the deeply rural areas, to the most impoverished and to include women in information programmes, existing power dynamics will ensure that the benefits intended for the rural poor will be taken up by an urban-based, better-off, relatively privileged grouping of people.

However, even when potential beneficiaries have the necessary information there are still complex legal and administrative processes in making a restitution claim, in setting up a legal entity such as a CPA and in applying for a grant. This further disadvantages communities who lack the expertise and appropriate levels of literacy.

While some NGOs are playing an important role in providing support to potential beneficiaries, NGOs are being threatened with funding cuts and often lack capacity. Government should play a role in supporting NGOs, recognising the comparative advantages of NGOs in working with communities.

## **5.7 Linking land reform to livelihoods**

For land reform to address poverty alleviation effectively the department needs to address the economic and settlement needs of families. The department's budget and mission does not include land use, and its role stops at land delivery. The department needs to forge links with other government departments – most crucially agriculture, trade and industry, water, education, health, public works in order to ensure poverty related needs are met. Coordinated effort at the point of land delivery



to communities will make a start in ensuring viable settlements as well as opportunities for income generation.

There is a need to reform established economic structures that currently support commercial agriculture (May 1995). A broad-based strategy needs to create viable rural livelihoods and to provide essential needs such as water, education, and health care to improve the quality of rural life. As May points out the existing structure of commercial agriculture has contributed to decay. The present model of commercialisation enhances productivity while generating extensive landlessness and rural poverty.

The removal of past biases, such as subsidies to white farmers, will not automatically lead to the success of small and particularly subsistence farmers. Nor will it be cheap – it will require development of schools, health facilities, roads, sanitation, electricity and water provision to improve life in rural areas, in addition to direct support to small farmers. And this will require government expenditure.

In terms of attacking mass poverty a key question is the extent to which agricultural employment can contribute to the creation of jobs and livelihoods for rural women and men?

There is much current debate on the ability of agriculture to support livelihoods creation. Lipton *et al.* talk of agriculture's ability to create part time livelihoods 'not splendid, or even necessarily emergent livelihoods, but decent contribution to household incomes' (Lipton *et al.* 1996: ix). The evidence they draw on is the larger share of agriculture to GDP in other countries at a similar level of development to South Africa and to the success of the family farm in other parts of the world. This ignores the specific realities of South Africa, including the close links between the rural and a very developed urban context, and the reality of rural household structure and relations. In addition, the livelihoods approach does not call for a more fundamental redressing of present inequalities in resource allocation.

Like the Government's approach, Lipton *et al.* (1996) promote small-scale agriculture on the basis of the small family farm since it saves on labour costs by drawing on the labour of household

members. What this ignores is the reality of households in rural South Africa where women are often the only able-bodied, adult rural dwellers around. A study in the Transkei for example, found that 71 per cent of women were managing farms on their own because their husbands were away (Bembridge 1988 in Vaughan 1994). Similarly an unintended change of hands occurred in a National Union of Mineworkers' production cooperative for retrenched (male) mine workers when the former mine workers returned to urban areas to look for jobs, leaving the cooperative in the hands of their wives and daughters. (Vaughan 1994). Men leave rural areas to seek jobs because farming does not provide a viable alternative to urban jobs. Women's mobility, on the other hand, is constrained by their responsibilities within the home and as a result of men's authority which dictates they tend the rural home (Todes 1996).

Hence current economic realities and gender power relations threaten to perpetuate apartheid *bantustans* as the able-bodied, educated and skilled leave agricultural production in the hands of overburdened women (Zulu 1995). Women overburdened by fetching water and firewood and caring for children in the absence of proper health facilities are not likely to represent the family labour necessary to make small-scale farming work in the way envisaged. The livelihoods approach tends also to reinforce current inequalities in South African society, and leave unaddressed the crucial issue of the creation of full time jobs, at decent rates of pay, with decent working conditions so that women and men may lead dignified lives.

## **5.8 The role of NGOs and women's organisations**

NGOs, particularly those which played a role in supporting mass-based people's organisations during the apartheid era, have a critical role to play in democratising society. In the land sector a network such as the National Land Committee (NLC) which grew out of struggles by land claiming communities to restore their land rights, continues to play a role in facilitating community endeavours to redress inequities in land distribution. Many of the affiliates of the NLC are currently playing a role in supporting community-based networks aimed at ensuring that the demands of the rural poor are heard within

- present land struggles. Increasingly the NLC and its affiliates are grappling with women's land rights.

However the strong movement of NGOs and women's organisations that made their impact in struggles against apartheid are today poor shadows. They have been drained of their most vibrant personnel and they face declining resources as international funding NGOs withdraw support on the basis that apartheid is now over.

In addition, NGOs face difficulties in working out their role with the state. In the land sector, as with other sectors, key government officials are the comrades, and even at times the very founders of NGOs. There is an uneasy relationship. NGOs are angered at the slow pace of land reform and at Government's seeming reluctance to act in the interests of the rural poor. However, their response to the politicians and heads of administration who were former staff members and comrades is ambivalent. The relationship between NGOs and the post-apartheid Government clearly needs to be different from that between NGOs and the apartheid regime, and this difference is being teased out.

Women's organisations face similar issues since their key women activists are now in government. Ironically women's organisations have been drained as a result of their victory in achieving a large contingent of women into national and provincial parliament. South Africa has an impressive 101 women Members of Parliament in a parliament of 400 members. This has been achieved through women's struggles, and by deploying women from the country's vibrant anti-apartheid movement into parliament. The victory has thus been achieved at the expense of organisations in civil society. A review of the difficulties women parliamentarians have experienced in raising women's concerns in parliament, a more nuanced understanding of the limits of parliament in addressing key issues

relating to women and the awareness of the weakness of organisations in civil society results in a rethink on what should be done come the next general election.

## 6 Conclusion

The post-apartheid Government has a crucial role to play in redressing the injustices of the past. However, government's neo-liberal macroeconomic framework limits options in addressing these inequities. It results in market-based land reform, and in limited state assistance to small-scale subsistence agricultural producers.

With regard to gender equity, government needs a more even approach. Researchers and planners often ignore gender disparities and women's experience, and may be referred to as gender blind. This results in farm workers, farmers, labour tenants and the landless being understood as being men. Hence, while rural communities are very often marginalised in national discussion, their concerns not being represented or considered as a result of urban bias, for rural women there is an increased marginalisation as a result of male bias. Policy formulation needs to be better informed by the actual experiences and needs of women.

In addition to these state-imposed constraints, land reform and the restructuring of agriculture take place under extremely conflictual circumstances. The needs of poor African women and men are contested at every turn by a still powerful and organised white farming sector. Women's rights to land are threatened by chiefs, husbands, brothers and sons. What is at stake is not only an economic resource, but also power, privilege and status. The reorganisation of resource allocation threatens the existing power dynamic based on current class, race and gender power relation and the privilege of white farmers, traditional authorities and men.

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